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NPP And Prudential Bank Affair Reminds Me Of The NPP And The Concordia Ventures Affair- Part 1 Of 2

By Mahama Haruna

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At the heart of the current wrangling within the NPP is a bank account in the name of the NPP which is operated by non officers of the party; Ken Ofori Atta and Oppon Bi operated at the Prudential Bank.

Two weeks to the general elections of 2012, almost 2 million dollars was overdrawn on this account by these gentlemen but Jake Obetsebi-Lamptey the former National Chairman denied any knowledge of the existence and operations of this account.

The bank has written a final warning letter to the party, demanding payment of the principal and interest to the tune of over 4 million dollars or face a law suit.

The flagbearer Nana Addo tried convincing the National Chairman and General who are principal signatories to all legitimate NPP accounts to allow for the usage of the parliamentary filling fees to settle the debt but National Chairman and the General Secretary have both refused to allow for this depleting of the party coffers to happen.

They insisted that since Ken Ofori Atta and Oppon Bio were not party officials, they should be made to explain how these monies were raised and used. They insist that the bank should deal with them as individuals who may have even committed "fraud".

This reminds me of the NPP and Concordia venture Affair. A recap of the issue supported by a narration by Prince Prah a blogger has thrown more light on the NPP and Concordia ventures affair as follows:

Indeed after the 1996 Elections, there had been complaints from many quarters about the way in which the Party's flag-bearer in the 1996 Presidential elections, Mr. J.A. Kufuor, had conducted his campaign. Some sections of the party led by supporters of Nana Akufo-Addo who was then nursing an ambition to contest as flagbearer laid the blame for the loss of the elections on Kufuor and accused him of "political duplicity and financial impropriety".

Among the accusations was the claim that the former presidential candidate had diverted into his private account donations that had been made by party supporters outside Ghana. Allegations were also made that Kufuor had used the name of the NPP to enter into business deals, using the stamp of the party without the knowledge or the approval of the party leadership.

An example of the transactions was the case in which it was claimed that Kufuor and his campaign team had bought 55 motorbikes from a private company in the name of the party. It was alleged that they had

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paraded the motorbikes as gifts from Friends of J.A. Kufuor (FOJAK), and had used the transaction as a proof of their ability to raise financial support for the NPP.

Subsequently, the company that supplied the motorbikes, Concordia Ventures Ltd, claimed that it had not been paid for the purchase and took legal action against the NPP in the High Court in Accra. The party executives, led by the National Chairman, Mr. Peter Ala Adjetey, challenged the suit on the ground that the NPP leadership had not endorsed the purchase of the motorbikes from Concordia Ventures.

He contended that, although the signatories of the transaction-Alhaji Issaka Inusah and Tommy Amematekpor-had claimed to be acting on behalf of the NPP, neither of them had necessary authority to commit the Party. Further the Party Chairman maintained that at no time was the sale agreement with Concordia Ventures ratified by the Party leadership.

He explained that the only people who had the appropriate power and authority to seal the deal in the name of the Party were himself as the Chairman, the Treasurer and the General Secretary of the Party. According to the Chairman, Inusah and Amematekpor had acted in their capacities as Chairman and Logistic Manager, respectively, of Kufuor's campaign team. Chairman Adjetey, therefore, argued that the persons who could be held liable for the amount owing to Concordia Ventures were Kufuor and the members of his campaign team who had entered into transaction. The NPP as a party had no responsibility in the matter.

This view was challenged by both Kufuor and his camp and also by Concordia Ventures Ltd. Kufuor continued to maintain that the purchase of the motorbikes was a legitimate transaction on behalf of the NPP and in the name of the Party. In this connection, it is worth observing that the argument of Chairman Adjetey that the signatories of the sale agreement were acting in their personal capacities as members of the presidential campaign team of Kufuor appeared to imply that Kufuor's presidential campaign team was in some way independent of the NPP.

For its part, Concordia Ventures argued that the agreement had been concluded with officials of the campaign team of Mr. J. A. Kufuor, who was the NPP's presidential candidate in the 1996 elections. They claimed that the transaction had been entered into with the full knowledge, consent and blessing of the NPP, and for the benefit of that Party.

While the ruling of the High Court on the case was awaited sometime in early July 1997, a bombshell was thrown into the Party in the form of serious allegations of financial impropriety against Mr. J.A. Kufuor.

In a strongly worded letter addressed to the National Chairman, Mr. Peter Ala Adjetey, one Mr. Colin Essamuah, a member of the Party, called for an immediate inquiry into the management of the finances of NPP campaign for the 1996 presidential elections. In the communication, Mr. Essamuah made allegations which impugned the integrity of the Party's presidential candidate and four others in regard to the party's finances in the 1996 elections. As a step, Mr. Essamuah demanded the immediate suspension of J.A. Kufuor from the Party and the banning of the party's General Secretary, Agyenim Boateng.

In response to the letter, the Chairman appointed a committee to probe the allegations against Kufuor and four others mentioned by Mr. Essamuah. The Committee was under the chairmanship of Mr. Anthony Deku, a senior member of the Party and a former member of the NLC (National Liberation Council) which ruled the country from February 1966 to September 1969. The other members of the Committee were Mr. Daniel Charles Gyimah of USAID and Ms. Gloria Akuffo, a strong party member and a lawyer at Nana Addo Dankwa Chambers.

The Committee was charged to investigate the management of finances for the 1996 presidential elections. Unfortunately, the committee took the view that because the NPP had included the motorbikes and other items as its asserts and had so reported to the Electoral Commission, there was no issue to be probed regarding the purchase of the motorbikes. Therefore, it decided that it would only call Essamuah to substantiate the charges it had leveled against Kufuor. Essamuah did not take kindly to this and protested vehemently to chairman of the party.

It happened that the attorneys for Concordia Ventures were from the law of Kujawu & Co. which was believed to have strong links with the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC). It came as no surprise, therefore, that the NDC used the allegations in the case to its advantage by accusing the Party and its leadership of financial and other improprieties.

On 9 June 1998, J.A Kufuor replied to Colin Essamuah's letter through the Pioneer newspaper. He referred to offences that he and his campaign team were alleged to have committed, including the illegal acquisition of some motorbikes and bicycles; the collection of separate amounts of £25,000 and \$100,000 from party supporters as well as an amount of \$50 million from Nana Akwasi Agyeman, the Kumasi Metropolitan Chief Executive. All the sums of money were intended for the 1996 election



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campaign but which had allegedly found their way into their pockets. He vehemently denied the allegations and described them as unfounded and very misleading, adding that they must therefore not be taken seriously.

Concerning the moneys he was alleged to have collected abroad, he denied ever collecting and pocketing such large sums of money. The 1996 NPP Presidential candidate also said that any debt incurred in the course of the campaign ought to be borne by the party as a whole and not any individual.

He further said that if, in spite of this, the Party felt that it would probe them at all costs then they should go ahead. He, however, cautioned the committee which would undertake the probe to let truthfulness and transparency prevail during the probe.

In a story written by Steve Mallory in the issue of The African Observer of Monday June 15-Sunday June 28, 1998, Mr. Kojo Mpainim, the Director of Finance of Kufuor's 1996 campaign, made an attack on the Chairman of the Party. He accused Mr. Adjetei of engaging in a politically motivated fishing expedition.

He claimed that the party chairman had said privately to his close associates that he would quit his position as Chairman of the NPP if Kufuor were re-nominated as the Party's presidential candidate for the elections to be held in the year 2000.

Mpainim was quoted as saying that "the only way therefore for (Adjetei) to remain as chairman for the party was to tarnish the image of Kufuor, using surrogates like Colin Essamuah to write a scurrilous letter and use it as a basis for a so-called probe".

Mpainim also alleged that Adjetei had been conspiring and plotting with "some political generals" to reduce the influence of Kufuor in the NPP and scuttle his bid for a second attempt at the presidency. He alleged that Kwame Donkoh Fordwor, the Ashanti Regional Chairman of the Party, was one of the "architects of the dirty scheme" to destroy Kufuor. These allegations were, of course, hotly denied by both Peter Adjetei and Dr. Donkoh Fordwor who described them as absurd.

The decision in the case between the Concordia Ventures Ltd. and the NPP was given on Friday 24 July 1997. The Accra High Court presided over by his Lordship Justice Nana Gyamera Tawiah ruled that the New Patriotic Party (NPP) was liable for the settlement of an outstanding amounts of \$90,000 and ₵16,460,000 owed to Concordia Ventures for the purchase of 55 Yamaha motorbikes in 1996.

The court also granted the company's claim for interest at the rate of 47 percent, effective from November 15, 1996. Costs in the sum of 5 million cedis were also awarded against the NPP.

Concordia Ventures was represented by Mr. Kwadwo Amofo of Kudjau Chambers. The NPP defence team, led by the veteran lawyer Mr. T.D. Broddie-Mends, was conspicuously absent from court.

Giving reasons for the ruling, Justice Nana Gyamera said, "I am really at a loss as to how the defendants (NPP) can be said not to have authorized a logistics director and a campaign manager to order the motorbikes for their campaign activities during the 1996 elections".

He said that at the time the agreement was ratified in October 1996, political party campaigns for power in the 1996 elections were "at its highest pitch". He noted that the action of the Director of Logistics and the Campaign Manager in procuring motorbikes was something which the party knew of and from which it benefited.

Hence the NPP, and not the 1996 campaign team, should be held liable. "I therefore find their defence to be a hollow one and accordingly enter judgment in favour of plaintiff (Concordia Ventures Ltd) as prayed for with costs assessed as ₵5 million".

Part 2 will throw more light on happenings within the NPP after the High court ruled against the party.

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